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U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

USDA PROPOSES FEE INCREASE FOR INSPECTION SERVICES FOR PROCESSED PRODUCTS

WASHINGTON, March 14—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to increase fees for certain voluntary (i.e., industry-requested) inspection, grading and certification of processed fruits and vegetables.

Daniel Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proposals would raise the basic hourly rate charged users who have not signed term contracts for these services from the current \$31 to \$34.50, and the overtime basic hourly fee from \$7 to one-half the hourly rate. The hourly rate for copying inspection documents would rise from the current \$31 to \$34.50.

For those having signed term contracts, the hourly charges would rise as follows:

From \$25 to \$29 for yearly in-plant full-time services, i.e., services of a minimum of 40 hours per week.

From \$28 to \$34.50 for full-time in-plant services for less than a year's duration, and of more than four week's duration.

Plants using the services for fewer than four weeks per year would be charged the non-contract hourly rate, \$34.50, Haley said.

Increased costs in the last year necessitate the changes, Haley said. Authority for such changes is in the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, which requires that fees be reasonable, and as nearly as possible, cover the cost of rendering services.

Notice of the proposed increases will appear as a proposed rule in the March 15 Federal Register. Copies and further information may be obtained from Raymondo O'Neal, USDA, AMS, Fruit and Vegetable Division, Processed Products Branch, Room 0723-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; telephone (202) 447-5021.

Comments, postmarked by April 15 may be sent to the Chief, Fruit and Vegetable Division, Processed Products Branch, USDA, AMS, Rm. 0709-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456.

Carolyn Coutts (202) 447-8998

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USDA PROPOSES INCREASES IN DAIRY PRODUCT GRADING AND INSPECTION FEES

WASHINGTON, March 14—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has proposed increasing certain fees for its “voluntary” (i.e., industry-solicited) grading and inspection services funded by the dairy industry.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proposed increases reflect costs of recapitalizing the program.

The proposed increases are as follows:

—From \$41.00 per hour to \$46.60 per hour for intermittent grading and inspection services, with travel and per diem costs continuing to be charged in addition to the hourly charge; and

—From \$36.00 per hour to \$41.60 per hour for “continuous resident” grading and inspection, i.e., for a grader-inspector assigned to a plant permanently.

Under law, the dairy grading program, like other voluntary commodity grading programs, is user-fee funded and must balance its fee income against its costs, Haley said.

If adopted, the proposal would help ensure that the dairy grading inspection program is financially self-supporting, Haley said.

Copies of the proposed rule may be obtained from the Dairy Grading Section, Dairy Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2750-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. Comments, to be received no later than April 11, and should be sent to Dairy Division, rm. 2968-S, at the same address.

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USDA PROPOSES INCREASES IN PORK ORDER IMPORT ASSESSMENTS

WASHINGTON, March 18—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to increase assessments on imported pork and pork products by four- to five-hundredths of a cent per pound, or the equivalent of nine- to eleven-hundredths of a cent per kilogram.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proposed upward adjustment reflects a 23-percent

increase in hog prices paid at major U.S. markets this past year.

The assessment adjustment is authorized by the Pork Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act of 1985, Haley said. The rate of assessment, one-quarter of one percent of market price, remains unchanged. The rate applies to all pork and pork products, domestic or imported. The only change is in the amount of the assessment.

“Assessments on imported pork and pork products are established by formula each year, based on U.S. market prices for hogs,” Haley said. “This proposed change will bring importer assessments more in line with those being paid by domestic producers,” he said.

The proposed changes will appear in the March 19 Federal Register. Comments, postmarked no later than April 18, may be sent to Ralph L. Tapp, chief, Marketing Programs and Procurement Branch, Livestock and Seed Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2624-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. Copies of the proposed rule and additional information are available from that office, telephone (202) 382-1115.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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USDA REVISES GRADING STANDARDS FOR PICKLES

WASHINGTON, March 19—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is revising certain grading standards used voluntarily by the U.S. pickle industry, effective April 22.

The revisions eliminate the minimum salt standard, reduce the minimum acidity standard, permit a little stem, and extend USDA grading to the so-called “refrigerated type,” that is, packaged pickles available at food stores’ refrigerated counters.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service, said these would be the first major changes in the product’s standards in over 20 years, and reflect the pickle industry’s declared wishes to accommodate changing consumer tastes and packaging preferences.

Lowering salinity and acidity standards provides the mildness many shoppers now seek in high-grade, jarred, open-shelved pickles, Haley said.

Permitting a bit more stem in the pickle reflects the industry's switch to mechanical picking of cucumbers, which leaves stems a little longer than when they are picked by hand, Haley said. Without this change, the cost of shortening the stems could inevitably raise the retail price of pickles, he said.

Over the past decade, refrigerated packs of pickles appeared in the marketplace without benefit of USDA grading. USDA grading of this increasingly popular pack of pickles will offer consumers the standards of reliability which have guided their other pickle purchases for years, Haley said.

The final rule incorporating these revisions will be published in the March 21 Federal Register. For copies and additional information, contact Harold A. Machias, Fruit and Vegetable Division, Processed Products Branch, AMS, USDA, Rm. 0714-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6457; telephone (202) 447-6247.

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USDA PROTECTS EIGHT NEW PLANT VARIETIES

WASHINGTON, March 19—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued certificates of protection to developers of eight new varieties of seedreproduced plants, including artichoke, barley, creeping bentgrass, corn, cotton, soybean and tomato.

Kenneth H. Evans, an official with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said developers of the new varieties will have the exclusive right to reproduce, sell, import, and export their products in the United States for 18 years. Certificates of protection are granted after a review of the breeders' records and claims that each new variety is novel, uniform and stable.

The following varieties have been issued certificates of protection:

- the Imperial Star variety of artichoke, developed by The Regents of the University of California, Alameda, Calif.;
- the WestBred Barcott variety of barley, developed by Western Plant Breeders Inc., Bozeman, Mont.;
- the Cobra variety of creeping bentgrass, developed by International Seeds Inc., Halsey, Ore.;

- the LH160 and LH190 varieties of corn, developed by Holden's Foundation Seeds Inc., Williamsburg, Iowa;
- the GSC 1093 variety of cotton, developed by Lubrizol dba Agrigenetics Corp., Goodyear, Ariz.;
- the AP 2324 variety of soybean, developed by Nickerson American Plant Breeders Inc., Ames, Iowa; and
- the Beall's Gourmet variety of tomato, developed by Frances B. Chesser, Upper Marlboro, Md.

The certificates of protection for the Imperial Star artichoke variety and the WestBred Barcott barley variety are being issued to be sold by variety name only as a class of certified seed, and to conform to the number of generations specified by the owner.

A certificate of protection for the S-541 variety of safflower, developed by SeedTec International Inc., Woodland, Calif., is being reissued under Title V of the Federal Seed Act, to be sold by variety name only as a class of certified seed.

The plant variety protection program is administered by USDA's AMS and provides marketing protection to developers of new and distinctive seedreproduced plants ranging from farm crops to flowers.

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CSRS SEEKS COMMENTS ON PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL RULES

WASHINGTON, March 19—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative State Research Service is seeking public comments on regulations it has proposed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to ensure environmental implications are properly considered in USDA-funded research activities.

According to CSRS Administrator Dr. John Patrick Jordan, "The proposed regulations serve a dual purpose: they would assure CSRS' compliance with NEPA and, just as significantly, provide our state partners a solid framework on which to base decisions involving research that potentially could affect the human environment."

The proposed regulations set forth specific policies, procedures, and responsibilities under which CSRS would ensure that NEPA laws are carried out in USDA-funded research. They cover a wide range of issues,

including preparation of environmental impact documents and provisions for making documents available for public review.

CSRS, primarily a research funding agency, is USDA's principal link to the U.S. universities where agricultural research is carried out, including 59 state and territorial agricultural experiment stations attached to land-grant universities, 17 predominantly black 1890 institutions including Tuskegee University, and 28 colleges of veterinary medicine.

The proposed regulations were published Feb. 27 in the Federal Register. Comments must be received by April 29, and should be sent to Dr. Clare I. Harris, Associate Administrator, Cooperative State Research Service, Room 305-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250-2200.

For more information and copies of the proposed regulations, contact Dr. Harris at the above address, or call (202) 447-7441. Copies of the Federal Register are available at most public libraries.

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MADIGAN NAMES MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES TO AMERICAN EGG BOARD

WASHINGTON, March 19—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan has named nine members and nine alternate members to the American Egg Board to serve two-year terms ending Dec. 31, 1992.

Appointed members and alternates, by region, are:

North Atlantic states—Galen N. Buckwalter, Greencastle, Pa.; alternate, Joseph H. Fortin, Lebanon, Conn.; John A. Russo, Hope Valley, R.I.; alternate, Shirley A. Steele, Bear, Del.

South Atlantic states—P. Jack Davis, Shady Dale, Ga.; alternate, Anderson J. Walters, Jetersville, Va.

East North Central states—Timothy J. Weaver, Versailles, Ohio; alternate, Joseph J. Maust, Pigeon, Mich.; Frank N. Manwaring, Mentone, Ind.; alternate, Ronald D. Truex, Warsaw, Ind.

West North Central states—Joseph W. Claybaugh, Carroll, Neb.; alternate, Stuart M. Friedell, Minneapolis, Minn.

South Central states—Bob D. Squires, Springdale, Ark.; alternate, Jim R. Young, Little Rock, Ark.

Western states—Reginald L. Keddie, Aurora, Ore.; alternate, Fred

Schaefer, Rochester, Wash.; Glenn M. Hickman, Glendale, Ariz.; alternate, Antonio Cobarrubia, Turlock, Calif.

Membership terms on the 18-member board are staggered so that half of the membership is newly appointed every year in order to provide continuity in policy. The board administers an egg research and promotion program authorized by the Egg Research and Consumer Information Act of 1974. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service reviews the program's budget, plans, and projects to assure that it operates in the public interest.

The program is funded entirely by a five-cent per 30-dozen assessment on eggs marketed by egg producers with flocks of over 30,000 hens.

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USDA CELEBRATES AMERICA'S BOUNTY WITH NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY

WASHINGTON, March 20—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan will be joined tomorrow by Presidential Counsel C. Boyden Gray in leading the U.S. Department of Agriculture's annual celebration of National Agriculture Day.

Starting at noon in the patio of USDA's Administration Building on The Mall, Madigan, Gray and Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Jack C. Parnell will address guests representing all sectors of the agricultural industry, state governments, the U.S. Congress, and others.

Gray's address will focus on new uses for U.S. agricultural products. Special displays at the event will exhibit some of these new uses.

Madigan today said the annual celebration honors the productivity of America's most vital industry and acknowledges the bounty of food and fiber provided by American farmers and other workers in the U.S. agriculture.

"We want all Americans to know that they enjoy the most plentiful, healthful and affordable food supply in the world, and that the food and fiber business as a whole is America's strongest," Madigan said.

Special guests include children from the Van Ness Elementary School in Washington. Mrs. Evelyn George Madigan, wife of the secretary, will personally welcome the students. Van Ness Elementary is USDA's "adopted school." For several years department employees have donated

time and money to tutor Van Ness students and assist the school in acquiring computers and other educational supplies.

The event will also feature several exhibits illustrating the National Agriculture Day theme—America's Bounty—and an ethanol-powered van provided by the Missouri Corn Growers Association.

Baskets of food on display for the event will be donated to the Capital Area Community Food Bank.

Agriculture is the largest industry in the United States. The production, processing, shipment and marketing of food and fiber products generates one of every six U.S. jobs and nearly 20 percent of the gross national product. The United States is also the world's largest agricultural exporter, shipping \$40.1 billion in food and fiber products overseas in 1990 while maintaining a favorable agricultural trade balance of \$17.6 billion.

National Agriculture Day is coordinated by The Agriculture Council of America. Each year, the president and secretary of agriculture recognize National Agriculture Day and Agriculture Week to focus attention on the important contribution the food and fiber industry makes to the American economy. At state and local levels across the country, the day and week are celebrated by numerous events to help increase awareness of U.S. agriculture's accomplishments and the challenges it faces in continuing to meet the world's food and fiber needs.

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